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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000115

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019-02-13

TAGS: MOPS KE DJ

SUBJECT: GODJ FONMIN AGREES TO TRANSIT OF SUSPECTED PIRATES BY USG

CLASSIFIED BY: James Swan, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahamoud Youssouf told Ambassador February 12 that the GODJ would accept to serve as a venue for transit of suspected pirates to Kenya for prosecution, provided that (1) onward transfer occur immediately, with minimal time on the ground in Djibouti, (2) the suspected pirates remain in USG custody the entire time, and (3) there is no publicity concerning Djibouti's role in the mission. While the Foreign Minister concurred with the general concept of transit of suspected pirates through Djibouti, we would need to advise him and the Djiboutian security services of any specific transfer operation, and ensure there is a detailed operational plan to respect the conditions the minister outlined. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador and DCM took advantage of a previously scheduled meeting with the Foreign Minister February 12 to ask about GODJ willingness to accept short-turnaround transit of suspected pirates through Djibouti en route to Kenya. The Ambassador outlined a hypothetical scenario in which the suspects would be flown in by USG helo and transferred immediately to a USG fixed-wing aircraft for onward flight to Kenya. The suspects would remain in USG custody the entire time.

¶3. (C) Youssouf responded without hesitation that the GODJ would accept to serve as a venue for transit of the suspected pirates, provided that the helo-to-plane hand-off occur with minimal time on the ground, that the suspects remain in USG custody at all times, and that there is no publicity that Djibouti was used as a point of transfer. He underscored that Djibouti is prepared to serve as a site for transit of the suspects, but absolutely does not want to be given custody of them at any time or otherwise face a situation in which the suspects would be brought before the Djiboutian judicial system.

¶4. (C) Comment: The possibility of suspected pirates transiting through Djibouti was raised at only a general level with Youssouf but his response was clear and immediate: the GODJ will agree to this, under the conditions he described. Post is separately double-tracking this proposal with the GODJ security services to ensure they also are aware of and support use of Djibouti for transit. If an interagency decision is taken to effect a transfer through Djibouti, we will need to advise the GODJ in advance of the specific operation, and ensure there is a detailed operational plan that addresses the conditions outlined by the Foreign Minister. Post believes it is also in USG interest to minimize the visibility of any Djibouti role in transfer of detainees, in order to avoid attracting undue attention to CJTF-HOA and Camp Lemonier' involvement in such transfers.

SWAN

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSS_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:9eaf092c-dac8-4f30-bc